

MARC Complete Streets Policy

Policy Highlights

- MARC seeks to achieve the Kansas City region’s vision of a safe, balanced, regional multimodal transportation system that is coordinated with land use planning, supports equitable access to opportunities and protects the environment. This can be achieved by implementing Complete Streets and context-sensitive solutions.
- Further, the MARC Board of Directors adopted a policy that supports the integration of “green streets”¹ concepts into projects in order to advance context-sensitive, multimodal uses and promote environmental solutions in the region’s transportation planning, project development and project selection processes.
- This Complete Streets Policy applies to the following:
 1. All MARC planning activities that involve public rights-of-way, including the metropolitan transportation plan.
 2. Any activities conducted by MARC to program federal funds for projects in the Transportation Improvement Program.
- Projects shall provide safe accommodations for all users who have legal access to and may reasonably be expected to use the facilities, while being sensitive to both current and future community context. Project sponsors retain the design decision authority over their projects and exceptions are specified. MARC committees will develop procedures to incorporate this Complete Streets Policy in their work.

Background

The Kansas City region’s metropolitan transportation plan, *Transportation Outlook 2040*, was adopted by the MARC Board in June 2010 and updated in June 2015. This plan includes policies and strategies that support implementation of Complete Streets. MARC’s Complete Streets Policy helps guide the agency’s planning and programming work and supports the implementation of *Transportation Outlook 2040*.

In 2010, the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) issued an updated Policy Statement on Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation that calls for all transportation agencies “to improve conditions and opportunities for walking and bicycling and to integrate walking and bicycling into their transportation systems.” The USDOT encourages transportation agencies “to go beyond minimum standards to provide safe and convenient facilities for these modes.” The Policy Statement considers walking and bicycling equal to other transportation modes.

Transportation Outlook 2040 further indicates that strategies for stormwater management, urban heat island abatement, streetscaping and urban forestry can be incorporated to maximize environmental benefits while simultaneously creating transportation facilities that are accessible to all users, and foster non-motorized travel through more inviting, attractive and complete transportation corridors. The plan calls for the development of a technical framework to analyze and identify opportunities for incremental Complete Streets and “green street” improvements within the region. Other plans adopted by the MARC Board that support the implementation of integrated Complete Streets and “green street”

concepts include the MetroGreen Plan (2001), the Best Management Practices Manual to Protect Water Quality (2003), the Clean Air Action Plan (2004 and 2011), the Eco-Logical Action Plan (2008), and the Greater Kansas City Regional Bikeway Plan (2015). Additionally, MARC's Regional Forestry Framework (2011) calls for increased canopy coverage through streetscaping, forest protection and other mechanisms.

Definition

Complete Streets are streets, highways, bridges and facilities that are planned, designed, operated and maintained for the needs and safety of all users along and across the entire public right of way. This includes people of all ages and abilities who are walking; using powered, street-legal vehicles such as cars, trucks, motorcycles or buses; bicycling; using transit or mobility aids; and freight shippers. Complete Streets integrate contextually-appropriate green infrastructure techniques.¹

Regional Vision

In June 2010, the MARC Board of Directors adopted *Transportation Outlook 2040* as the Kansas City region's metropolitan transportation plan. It guides the development of supportive implementation strategies and investment priorities for transportation into the future. The plan envisions a sustainable region that increases the vitality of our society, economy and environment for current residents and future generations.

In 2014, the MARC Board of Directors updated the policy framework of *Transportation Outlook 2040* to emphasize the region's collective effort to become more "vibrant, connected and green." In addition, the content of the metropolitan transportation plan was updated in 2015 to emphasize the importance of Complete Streets concepts in the design and implementation of projects throughout the region.

Since the adoption of *Transportation Outlook 2040*, MARC's Complete Streets Policy has been used as a tool for reviewing transportation project applications seeking federal sources of funding through MARC's programming processes. Additionally, the states of Kansas and Missouri, along with a number of local cities and counties, have adopted Complete Streets policies. As of October 2015, there are 15 Complete Streets policies/resolutions in place in the MARC region.

Complete Streets aid communities and help the Kansas City region achieve progress toward its 10 transportation system goals in the following ways:

- **Climate Change and Energy Use** — Complete Streets help decrease the use of fossil fuels through reductions in miles traveled and travel delays in motorized vehicles. In addition, Complete Streets decrease energy use by reducing urban heat islands, making transportation systems more efficient and improving land use integration.
- **Economic Vitality** — Complete Streets create more vibrant, attractive places with increased access for all users, while accommodating the movement of freight, goods and services. Vibrant and accessible places increase property values and makes businesses more appealing.
- **Environment** — Complete Streets help improve air quality by providing transportation options that reduce miles traveled and shorten delays for motorized vehicles. In addition, Complete Streets help improve water quality by integrating contextually appropriate stormwater management practices, urban forestry and landscaping into transportation facility design.
- **Equity** — Complete Streets ensure that roadways accommodate all users, including those who choose or depend on transportation options other than a personal automobile. By supporting more transportation choices and services, Complete Streets help limit disparities. Complete Streets accommodate more than just vehicular travel, and help ensure that corridor users and

area residents are not overburdened by the noise, air and water pollution generated by motor vehicles.

- **Place Making** — Streets have historically functioned as public spaces. Complete Streets help encourage the creation of compelling quality places in our communities by coordinating transportation, environmental and land use planning and development.
- **Public Health** — By safely accommodating all users, Complete Streets facilitate healthy, active living by encouraging more people to walk, bicycle, or use transit and other mobility aids, and through design measures that improve air and water quality.
- **Safety and Security** — Complete Streets address the safety needs of all users in our region. Complete Streets help reduce the number of fatalities and serious injuries from traffic crashes.
- **System Condition** — Complete Streets concepts include the maintenance and operation of facilities, this helps ensure that the regional transportation network is maintained in good condition.
- **System Performance** — Complete Streets provide a continuous travel network for all transportation modes, which maximizes the value of existing investments.
- **Transportation Choices** — Complete Streets help maximize mobility opportunities for all people in the context of access to jobs, education, health care, shopping, entertainment, and other goods and services.

Policy Statement

MARC seeks to achieve the Kansas City region’s vision of a safe, balanced, regional multimodal transportation system that is coordinated with land use planning, supports equitable access to opportunities and protects the environment. This can be achieved by implementing Complete Streets and context-sensitive solutions.

MARC promotes the development of Complete Streets throughout the region and encourages all local jurisdictions to adopt and implement Complete Streets policies.

This Complete Streets Policy applies to the following:

1. All MARC planning activities that involve public rights-of-way, including the metropolitan transportation plan.
2. Any activities conducted by MARC to program federal funds for projects in the Transportation Improvement Program.

Requirements

1. This policy does not supersede any federal, state or local policy or law.
2. Planned and programmed projects shall provide safe accommodations for all users who have legal access and who may reasonably be expected to use the facilities, while being sensitive to both current and future community context.
3. This policy applies to all phases of a project, including planning, design, right-of-way acquisition, construction, construction engineering, operations and maintenance.
4. Planned and programmed projects shall make use of policies, guidelines and design standards that reflect best practices. Project sponsors retain design decision authority over their projects.

Recommendations

1. Integrated planning and design practices help achieve economic, community and environmental benefits. While this policy focuses on integrated planning and engineering approaches to

implementing Complete Streets, MARC also encourages project sponsors to provide other strategies for enforcement, education and encouragement when appropriate.

2. MARC encourages local governments to stay abreast of best practices by reviewing design guidelines, standards and resources — such as those referenced in MARC’s Complete Streets Handbook — to amend or adopt local design approaches to fit their communities’ needs. MARC also encourages project sponsors to use the MARC/APWA Manual of Best Management Practices to Protect Water Quality for an initial set of planning guidelines to incorporate “green street” strategies as part of transportation development. Additionally, MARC encourages project sponsors to use the MARC Regional Forestry Framework to incorporate canopy coverage and streetscaping into projects.
3. MARC encourages local governments to include performance measures in their adopted Complete Streets policies and procedures, and to follow-up with performance evaluations on a regular basis.
4. Networks of Complete Streets help build the framework for livable, sustainable communities by enabling people to connect to each other and to destinations, regardless of travel mode. MARC encourages local communities to coordinate and collaborate with one another, specifically in strategies for livable and sustainable communities, as well as in the integration of land use and environment with transportation.

Exceptions

Federal transportation funds programmed through MARC include a wide variety of project types and transportation programs. Many of these include non-roadway planning or construction projects, such as transit capital equipment, diesel engine retrofits, clean vehicle conversions, alternative fuel vehicle purchases/fleet replacements, compressed natural gas fueling stations, other Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program eligible projects, off-street bicycle/pedestrian trails, Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) programs and initiatives and others. Projects or programs which are clearly not “streets” should be exempt from this policy, but require MARC approval. However, all project activities made possible by funds programmed through MARC should still attempt to incorporate elements of this policy, such as impacts to all modes and users and “green street” best management practices.

Further, not every street can be complete for each user, and exceptions may need to be made for some projects. However, exceptions should not be common. Federal funding programmed in MARC’s Transportation Improvement Program should enable complete and direct connections to be made throughout the transportation network for all users, even where specific streets cannot accommodate all users.

The Total Transportation Policy Committee may grant exceptions to this policy. Staff and the modal and programming committees will review requests for exceptions and make recommendations to the Total Transportation Policy Committee. Exceptions may be granted in the following cases:

1. Where using specific modes of travel are prohibited by law, such as bicyclists and pedestrians on some sections of interstate highways or trucks on boulevards. In such cases, efforts should be made to accommodate prohibited modes elsewhere, as appropriate for each mode, to ensure network connectivity. Where a proposed project for a limited-access facility would cross a major barrier (such as a river, railroad or highway), consideration should be given to including access across the barrier for otherwise limited modes.
2. Where the cost of providing facilities for all users, especially pedestrians and bicyclists, would be excessively disproportionate to the need or likely use. Federal guidance defines this as

exceeding 20 percent of the total project costs; however, this exception should also be context sensitive. (For example, downtown streetscapes may have a larger percentage of project costs for pedestrians and bicyclists.)

3. Where population scarcity or other factors indicate an absence of need for both current and future conditions of the anticipated project life (usually a minimum of 20 years for roadways and 50 or more years for bridges).

Performance Measures

To assist with evaluation of this policy, MARC will continue to encourage meaningful progress in the region using performance measures included in *Transportation Outlook 2040* for the plan's 10 policy goals.

Implementation

To implement this Complete Streets Policy into planning and programming processes at the metropolitan level, MARC will take the following steps:

1. Ensure this policy is reflected in ongoing planning and programming work and current policies. MARC's transportation modal committees will develop procedures to incorporate this policy into their work, including their processes for making recommendations to the Total Transportation Policy Committee (TTPC).
2. Review all project applications seeking federal transportation funding for compliance with the Complete Streets Policy.
3. Monitor all projects receiving federal transportation funding through MARC's programming process for compliance with the Complete Streets Policy.
4. Engage project sponsors in evaluating projects for the Transportation Improvement Program that receive federal funding outside of MARC's programming processes.
5. Re-evaluate this policy regularly — at a minimum, before adopting each new or updated metropolitan transportation plan. Because the Complete Streets Policy Task Force is not a permanent standing subcommittee of the Total Transportation Policy Committee (TTPC), the TTPC co-chairs may convene a group to re-evaluate the policy as needed.

To carry out this Complete Streets Policy and encourage all local communities to address context-sensitive solutions and the needs of all roadway users on all public rights-of-way, MARC will take the following steps:

1. Encourage all local communities to adopt Complete Streets policies/resolutions and incorporate their policies into facility designs. This includes working with local communities to develop and implement their policies.
2. Provide assistance to local jurisdictions seeking to develop a Complete Streets policy, along with resources such as MARC's Complete Streets Handbook and the MARC/APWA Manual of Best Management Practices to Protect Water Quality.
3. Disseminate best practices for Complete Streets implementation through webinars, special workshops, training courses and the Government Training Institute (GTI).
4. Help coordinate inter-jurisdictional discussion and efforts.

¹ The term "green street" is used to describe roadway planning that enhances environmental suitability by using natural systems to manage stormwater by reducing flows, improving water quality, and enhancing watershed health. The use of trees and vegetation reduce greenhouse gases and urban heat island effect. Green streets principles also promote the use of renewable energy to operate street lights, and uses energy-efficient

technologies to reduce carbon footprints. Applying these principles conserves natural systems for future generations.

“Green streets” support Complete Streets. “Green streets” achieve multiple benefits in addition to enhancing environmental suitability, such as creating more attractive streetscapes in corridors that connect neighborhoods and activity centers. This creates more livable communities.